

AN EVANGEL IN CYENE.

BY HAMLIN GARLAND.

I.

THE train drew out of the great Van Buren Street depot at 4.30 of a dark day in late October. A tall young man with a timid look in his eyes was almost the last one to get on, and his pale face wore a worried look as he dropped into an empty seat and peered out at the squalid buildings reeling past in the mist.

The buildings grew smaller, and vacant lots appeared stretching away in flat spaces, broken here and there by ridges of ugly squat little tenement blocks. Over this landscape vast banners of smoke streamed, magnified by the misty rain which was driven in from the lake.

At last there came a swell of land clothed as with trees. It was still light enough to see they were burr-oaks—and the young student's heart thrilled at sight of them. His forehead smoothed out, and his eyes grew tender with boyish memories.

He was seated thus, with head leaning against the pane, when another young man came down the aisle from the smoking-car and took a seat beside him with a pleasant word.

He was a handsome young fellow of twenty three or four. His face was large and beardless, and he had beautiful teeth.

He had a bold and keen look, in spite of the bang of yellow hair which hung over his forehead.

Some commonplaces passed between them, and then silence fell on each. The conductor coming through the car, the smooth-faced young fellow put up a card to be punched, and the student handed up a ticket, simply saying, "Kesota."

After a decent pause the younger man said, "Going to Kesota, are you?"

"Yes."

"So am I. I live there, in fact."

"Do you? Then perhaps you can tell me the name of your County Superintendent. I'm looking for a school." He smiled frankly. "I'm just out of Jackson University, and—"

"That so? I'm an Ann Arbor man myself." They took a moment for mutual warming up. "Yes, I know the Superintendent. Why not come right up to my boarding-place, and to-morrow I'll introduce you. Looking for a school, eh? What kind of a school?"

"Oh, a village school, or even a country school. It's too late to get a good place, but I've been sick, and—"

"Yes, the good positions are all snapped up; still, you might by accident hit on something. I know Mott; he'll do all he

can for you. By-the-way, my name's Allen."

The young student understood this hint and spoke. "Mine is Stacey."

The younger man mused a few minutes, as if he had forgotten his new acquaintance. Suddenly he roused up.

"Say, would you take a country school several miles out?"

"I think I would, if nothing better offered."

"Well, out in my neighborhood they're without a teacher. It's six miles out, and it isn't a lovely neighborhood. However, they will pay fifty dollars a month; that's ten dollars extra for the scrimmages. They wanted me to teach this winter—my sister teaches it in summer—but, great Peter! I can't waste my time teaching school, when I can run up to Chicago and take a shy at the pit and make a whole term's wages in thirty minutes."

"I don't understand," said Stacey.

"Wheat Exchange. I've got a lot of friends in the pit, and I can come in any time on a little deal. I'm no Jim Keene, but I hope to get cash enough to handle \$3000. I wanted the old gent to start me up in it, but he said, 'Nix come arouse.' Fact is, I dropped the money he gave me to go through college with." He smiled at Stacey's disapproving look. "Yes, indeed; there's where the jar came into our tender relations. Oh, I call on the governor—always when I've got a wad. I have fun with him." He smiled brightly. "Ask him if he don't need a little cash to pay for hog-killin', or something like that." He laughed again. "No, I didn't graduate at Ann Arbor. Funny how things go, ain't it? I was on my way back the third year, when I stopped in to see the pit—it's one o' the sights of Chicago, you know—and Billy Krans saw me looking over the rail. I went in, won, and then took a flyer on December. Come a big slump, and I failed to materialize at school."

"What did you do then?" asked Stacey, to whom this did not seem humorous.

"I wrote a contrite letter to the governor, stating case, requesting forgiveness—and money. No go! Couldn't raise neither. I then wrote casting him off, 'You are no longer father of mine.'" He smiled again radiantly. "You should have seen me the next time I went home! Plug hat! Imported suit! Gold watch!

Diamond shirt-stud! Cost me \$200 to paralyze the general, but I did it. My glory absolutely turned him white as a sheet. I knew what he thought, so I said: 'Perfectly legitimate, dad. The walls of Joliet are not gaping for me.' That about half fetched him—calling him *dad*, I mean—but he can't get reconciled to my business. 'Too many ups and downs,' he says. Fact is, he thinks it's gambling, and I don't argue the case with him. I'm on my way home now to stay over Sunday."

The train whistled, and Allen looked out into the darkness. "We're coming to the crossing. Now I can't go up to the boarding-place when you do, but I'll give you directions, and you tell the landlady I sent you, and it'll be all right. Allen, you remember—Herman Allen."

Following directions, Stacey came at length to a two-story frame house situated in the edge of the bank, with its back to the river. It stood alone, with vacant lots all about. A pleasant-faced woman answered his ring.

He explained briefly. "How do you do? I'm a teacher, and I'd like to get board here a few days while passing my examinations. Mr. Herman Allen sent me."

The woman's quick eye and ear were satisfied. "All right. Walk in, sir. I'm pretty full, but I expect I can accommodate you—if you don't mind Mr. Allen for a roommate."

"Oh, not at all," he said, while taking off his coat.

"Come right in this way. Supper will be ready soon."

He went into a comfortable sitting-room, where a huge open fire of soft coal was blazing magnificently. The walls were papered in florid patterns, and several enlarged portraits were on the walls. The fire was the really great adornment; all else was cheap, and some of it was tawdry.

Stacey spread his thin hands to the blaze, while the landlady sat down a moment, out of politeness, to chat, scanning him keenly. She was a handsome woman, strong, well-rounded, about forty years of age, with quick gray eyes and a clean, firm-lipped mouth.

"Did you just get in?"

"Yes. I've been on the road all day," he said, on an impulse of communication. "Indeed, I'm just out of college."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Mrs. Mills, stopping her rocking in access of interest. "What college?"

"Jackson University. I've been sick, and only came West—"

There came a look into her face that transformed and transfigured her. "*My* boy was in Ann Arbor. He was killed on the train on his way home one day." She stopped, for fear of breaking into a quaver, and smiled brightly. "That's why I always like college boys. They all stop here with me." She rose hastily. "Well, you'll excuse me, won't you, and I'll go an' 'tend to supper."

There was a great deal that was feminine in Stacey, and he felt at once the pathos of the woman's life. He looked a refined, studious, rather delicate young man, as he sat low in his chair and observed the light and heat of the fire. His large head looked to be full of learning, and his dark eyes were deep with religious fervor.

Several young women entered, and the room was filled with clatter of tongues. Herman came in a few moments later, his face in a girlish glow of color. Everybody rushed at him with loud outcry. He was evidently a great favorite. He threw his arms about Mrs. Mills, giving her a hearty hug. The girls pretended to be shocked when he reached out for them, but they were not afraid of him. They hung on his arms and besieged him with questions till he cried out, in jolly perplexity:

"Girls, girls! This will never do."

Mrs. Mills brushed out his damp yellow curls with her hands. "You're all wet."

"Girls, if you'll let me sit down, I'll take one on each knee," he said, pleadingly, and they released him.

Stacey grew red with sympathetic embarrassment, and shrank away into a corner.

"Go get supper ready," commanded Herman. And it was only after they left that he said to Stacey: "Oh, you found your way all right. I didn't see you—those confounded girls bother me so." He took a seat by the fire and surveyed his wet shoes. "I took a run up to Mott's house—only a half-block out o' the way. He said they'd be tickled to have you at Cyene. By-the-way, you're a theolog, aren't you?" Wallace nodded, and Herman went on: "So I told Mott. He

said you might work up a society out there at Cyene."

"Is there a church there?"

"Used to be, but—say, I tell you what you do: you go out with me to-morrow, and I'll give you the whole history."

The ringing of the bell took them out into the cheerful dining-room in a good-natured scramble. Mrs. Mills put Stacey at one end of the table, near a young woman who looked like a teacher, and he had full sweep of the table, which was surrounded by bright and sunny faces. The station hand was there, and a couple of grocery clerks, and a brakeman sat at Stacey's right hand. The table was very merry. They called each other by their Christian names, and there was very obvious courtship on the part of several young couples.

Stacey escaped from the table as soon as possible, and returned to his seat beside the fire. He was young enough to enjoy the chatter of the rest, but his timidity made him glad they paid so little attention to him. The rain had changed to sleet outside, and hammered at the window viciously, but the blazing fire and the romping young people set it at defiance. The landlady came to the door of the dining-room, dish and cloth in hand, to share in each outburst of laughter, and not infrequently the hired girl peered over her shoulder with a broad smile on her face. A little later, having finished their work, they both came in and took active part in the light-hearted fun.

Herman and one of the girls were having a great struggle over some trifle he had snatched from her hand, and the rest stood about laughing to see her desperate attempts to recover it. This was a familiar form of courtship in Kesota, and an evening filled with such romping was considered a "cracking good time." After the girl, red and dishevelled, had given up, Herman sat down at the organ, and they all sang Moody and Sankey hymns, negro melodies, and college songs till nine o'clock. Then Mrs. Mills called, "Come, now, boys and girls," and they all said good-night, like obedient children.

Herman and Wallace went up to their bedroom together.

"Say, Stacey, have you got a policy?" Wallace shook his head. "And don't want any, I suppose. Well, I just asked you as a matter of form. You see," he went on, winking at Wallace comically,

"nominally I'm an insurance agent, but practically I'm a 'lamb'—but I get a mouthful o' fur myself occasionally. What I'm working for is to get on that Wheat Exchange. That's where you get life! I'd rather be an established broker in that howling mob than go to Congress."

Suddenly a thought struck him. He rose on his elbow in bed and looked at Wallace just as he rose from a silent prayer. Catching his eye, Herman said:

"Say! why didn't you shout? I forgot all about it—I mean your profession."

Wallace crept into bed beside his communicative bedfellow in silence. He didn't know how to deal with such spirits.

"Say!" called Herman, suddenly, as they were about to go to sleep, "you 'ain't got no picnic, old man."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Wait till you see Cyene Church. Oh, it's a daisy snarl!"

"I wish you'd tell me about it."

"Oh, it's quiet now. The calmness of death," said Herman. "Well, you see it came this way. The church is made up of Baptists and Methodists, and the Methodists wanted an organ, because, you understand, father was the head-centre, and Mattie is the only girl among the Methodists who can play. The old man has got a head like a mule. He can't be switched off, once he makes up his mind. Deacon Marsden he don't believe in anything above tuning-forks, and he's tighter'n the bark on a bull-dog. He stood out like a sore thumb, and dad wouldn't give an inch.

"You see, they held meetings every other Sunday. So dad worked up the organ business and got one, and then locked it up when the Baptists held their services. Well, it went from bad to worse. They didn't speak as they passed by—that is, the old folks; we young folks didn't care a continental whether school kept or not. Well, upshot is, the church died out. The wind blew the horse-sheds down, and there they lie—and the church is standing there empty as an—old boot—and—" He grew too sleepy to finish.

Suddenly a comical idea roused Herman again. "Say, Stacey—by Jinks!—are you a Baptist?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Peter! ain't that lovely?" He chuckled shamelessly, and went off to sleep without another word.

II.

Herman was still sleeping when Stacey rose and dressed and went down to breakfast. Mrs. Mills defended Herman against the charge of laziness: "He's probably been out late all the week."

Stacey found Mott in the county courthouse, and a perfunctory examination soon put him in possession of a certificate. There was no question of his attainments.

He didn't see Herman again till dinner-time.

"Well, elder," said the latter, "I'm going down to get a rig to go out home in. It's colder'n a blue whetstone, so put on all the clothes you've got. Gimme your check, and I'll get your traps. Have you seen Mott?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, everything's all fixed."

He turned up about three o'clock, seated on the spring-seat of a lumber-wagon, beside a woman, who drove the powerful team. Whether she was young or old could not be told through her wraps. She wore a cap and a thick faded cloak.

Mrs. Mills hurried to the door. "Why, Mattie Allen! What you doin' out such a day as this? Come in here instanter!"

"Can't stop," called a clear boyish voice. "Too late."

"Well, land o' stars!—you'll freeze."

When Wallace reached the wagon side, Herman said, "My sister, Stacey."

The girl slipped her strong brown hand out of her huge glove and gave him a friendly grip. "Get right in," she said. "Herman, you're going to stand up behind."

Herman appealed to Mrs. Mills for sympathy. "This is what comes of having plebeian connections."

"Oh, dry up," laughed the girl, "or I'll make you drive."

Stacey scrambled in awkwardly beside her. She was not at all embarrassed, apparently.

"Tuck yourself in tight. It's mighty cold on the prairie."

"Why didn't you come down with the baroosh?" grumbled Herman.

"Well, the corn was contracted for and father wasn't able to come—he had another attack of neuralgia last night, after he got the corn loaded—so I had to come."

"Sha'n't I drive for you?" asked Wallace.

"No, thank you. You'll have all you can do to keep from freezing." She looked at his thin coat and worn gloves with keen eyes. He could not see her face—nothing but the pink cheeks, strong nose, and dark smiling eyes.

It was one of those terrible Illinois days when the temperature drops suddenly to zero, and the churned mud of the highways hardens into a sort of scoriac rock, which cripples the horses and sends the heavy wagons booming and thundering along like mad things. The wind was keen and terrible as a saw-bladed sword, and smote incessantly. The desolate sky was one thick impenetrable mass of swiftly flying cloud. When they swung out upon the long pike leading due north, Wallace drew his breath with a gasp, and bent his head to the wind.

"Pretty strong, isn't it?" shouted Mattie.

"Oh, the farmer's life is the life for me, tra-la!" sang Herman, from his shelter behind the seat.

Mattie turned. "What do you think of *Penelope* this month?"

"She's a-gitten there," said Herman, pounding his shoe heels.

"She's too smart for young Corey. She ought to marry a man like Bromfield. My! wouldn't they talk?"

"Did y' get the second bundle of magazines last Saturday?"

"Yes; and dad found something in the *Popular Science* that made him mad, and he burned it."

"Did 'e? Tum-la-la! Oh, the farmer's life for me!"

"Are you cold?" she asked Wallace.

He turned a purple face upon her. "No—not much."

"I guess you better slip right down under the blankets," she advised.

The wind blew gray out of the north—a wild blast which stopped the young student's blood in his veins. He hated to give up, but he could no longer hold the blankets up over his knees, so he slipped down into the corner of the box, with his back to the wind, with the blankets drawn over his head.

The powerful girl slapped the reins down on the backs of the snorting horses, and encouraged them with shouts like a man: "Get out o' this, Dan! Hup there, Nellie!"

The wagon boomed and rattled. The floor of the box seemed beaten with a

maul. The glimpses Wallace had of the land appalled him, it was so flat and gray and bare. The houses seemed poor, and drain-pipe scattered about told how wet it all was.

Herman sang at the top of his voice, and danced, and pounded his feet against the wagon-box. "This ends it! If I can't come home without freezing to death, I don't come. I should have hired a rig, irrespective of you—"

The girl laughed. "Oh, you're getting thin-blooded, Herman. Life in the city has taken the starch all out of you."

"Better grow limp in a great city than freeze stiff in the country," he replied.

An hour's ride brought them into a yard before a large gray-white frame house.

Herman sprang out to meet a tall old man with head muffled up. "Hello, dad! Take the team. We're just naturally froze solid—at least I am. This is Mr. Stacey, the new teacher."

"How de do? Run in; I'll take the horses."

Herman and Wallace stumbled toward the house, stiff and bent.

Herman flung his arms about a tall woman in the kitchen door. "Hello, muz!" he said. "This is Mr. Stacey, the new teacher."

"Draw up to the fire, sir. Herman, take his hat and coat."

Mattie came in soon with a boyish rush. She was gleeful as a happy babe. She unwound the scarf from her head and neck, and hung up her cap and cloak like a man, but she gave her hair a little touch of feminine care, and came forward with both palms pressed to her burning cheeks.

"Did you suffer, child?" asked Mrs. Allen.

"No; I enjoyed it."

Herman looked at Stacey. "I believe on my life she did."

"Oh, it's fun. I don't get a chance to do anything so exciting very often."

Herman clicked his tongue. "Exciting? Well, well!"

"You must remember things are slower here," Mattie explained.

She came to light much younger than Stacey thought her. She was not eighteen, but her supple and splendid figure was fully matured. Her hair hung down her back in a braid, which gave a subtle touch of childishness to her.

"Sis, you're still a-growin'," Herman said, as he put his arm around her waist and looked up at her.

She seemed to realize for the first time that Stacey was a young man, and her eyes fell.

"Well, now, set up the chairs, child," said Mrs. Allen.

When the young teacher returned from his cold spare room off the parlor the family sat waiting for him. They all drew up noisily, and Allen said:

"Ask the blessing, sir?"

Wallace said grace.

As Allen passed the potatoes he continued, "My son tells me you are a minister of the gospel."

"I have studied for it."

"What denomination?"

"Tut, tut!" warned Herman. "Don't start any theological rabbits to-night, dad. With jaw swelled up you won't be able to hold your own."

"I'm a Baptist," Stacey answered.

The old man's face grew grim. It had been ludicrous before with its swollen jaw. "Baptist?" The old man turned to his son, whose smile angered him. "Didn't you know no more'n to bring a Baptist preacher into this house?"

"There, there, father!" began the wife.

"Be quiet. I'm boss of this shanty."

Herman struck in: "Don't make a show of yourself, old man. Don't mind the old gent, Stacey; he's mumpy to-day, anyhow."

Stacey rose. "I guess I—I'd better not stay—I—"

"Oh, no, no! Sit down, Stacey. It's all right. The old man's a little acid at me. He doesn't mean it."

Stacey got his coat and hat. His heart was swollen with grief and indignation. He felt as if something fine were lost to him, and the cold outside was so desolate now.

Mrs. Allen was in tears; but the old man, having taken his stand, was going to keep it.

Herman lost his temper a little. "Well, dad, you're a little the cussedest Christian I ever knew. Stacey, sit down. Don't you be a fool just because he is—"

Stacey was buttoning his coat with trembling hands, when Martha went up to him.

"Don't go," she said. "Father's sick and cross. He'll be sorry for this to-morrow."

Wallace looked into her frank, kindly eyes and hesitated.

Herman said: "Dad, you are a lovely follower of Christ. You'll apologize for this, or I'll never set foot on your thresh-old again."

Stacey still hesitated. He was hurt and angry, but being naturally a sweet and gentle nature, he grew sad, and, yielding to the pressure of the girl's hand on his arm, he began to unbutton his overcoat.

She helped him off with it, and hung it back on the nail. She did not show tears, but her face was unwontedly grave.

They sat at the table again, and Herman and Mattie tried to restore something of the brightness which had been lost. Allen sat grimly eating, his chin pushed down like a hog's snout.

After supper, as his father was about retiring to his bedroom, Herman fixed his bright eyes on him, and something very hard and masterful came into his boyish face.

"Old man—you and I haven't had a settlement on this thing yet. I'll see you later."

Allen shrank before his son's look, but shuffled sullenly off without uttering a word.

Herman turned to Wallace. "Stacey, I want to beg your pardon for getting you into this scrap. I didn't suppose the old gentleman would act like that. The older he gets, the more his New Hampshire granite shows. I hope you won't lay it up against me."

Wallace was too conscientious to say he didn't mind it, but he took Herman's hand in a quick clasp.

"Let's have a song," proposed Herman. "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast, to charm a rock, and split a cabbage."

They went into the best room, where a fire was blazing, and Mattie and Herman sang hymns and old-fashioned love-songs and college glees wonderfully intermingled. They ended by singing "Lorena," a wailing, supersentimental love-song current in war-times, and when they looked around there was a lofty look on the face of the young preacher—a look of exaltation, of consecration and resolve.

III.

The next morning, at breakfast, Herman said, as he seized a hot biscuit, "We'll dispense with grace this morning,

and till after the war is over." But Wallace blessed his bread in a silent prayer, and Mattie thought it very brave of him to do so.

Herman was full of mockery. "The sun rises just the same, whether it's 'sprinkling' or 'immersion.' It's lucky Nature don't take a hand in these theological contests—she doesn't even referee the scrap. She never seems to care whether you are sparring for points or fighting to a finish. What you theologic middle-weights are really fighting for I can't see—and I don't care, till you fall over the ropes on to my corns."

Stacey listened in a daze to Herman's tirade. He knew it was addressed to Allen, and that it deprecated war, and that it was mocking. The fresh face and smiling lips of the young girl seemed to put Herman's voice very far away. It was such a beautiful thing to sit at table with a lovely girl.

After breakfast he put on his cap and coat and went out into the clear, cold November air. All about him the prairie extended, marked with farm-houses and lined with leafless hedges. Artificial groves surrounded each homestead, relieving the desolateness of the fields.

Down the road he saw the spire of a small white church, and he walked briskly towards it, Herman's description in his mind.

As he came near he saw the ruined sheds, the rotting porch, and the windows boarded up, and his face grew sad. He tried one of the doors, and found it open. Some tramp had broken the lock. The inside was even more desolate than the outside. It was littered with rotting straw and plum stones and melon seeds. Obscene words were scrawled on the walls, and even on the pulpit itself.

Taken altogether it was an appalling picture to the young servant of the Man of Galilee, a blunt reminder of the ferocity and depravity of man.

As he pondered the fire burned, and there rose again the flame of his resolution. He lifted his face and prayed that he might be the one to bring these people into the living union of the Church of Christ.

His blood set toward his heart with tremulous action. His eyes glowed with zeal like that of the Middle Ages. He saw the people united once more in this desecrated hall. He heard the bells ring-

ing, the sound of song, the smile of peaceful old faces, and voices of love and fellowship filling the anterooms where hate now scrawled hideous blasphemy against woman and against God.

As he sat there Herman came in, his keen eyes seeking out every stain and evidence of vandalism.

"Cheerful prospect—isn't it?"

Wallace looked up with the blaze of his resolution still in his eyes. His pale face was sweet and solemn.

"Oh, how these people need Christ!"

Herman turned away. "They need killing—about two dozen of 'em. I'd like to have the job of indicating which ones; I wouldn't miss the old man, you bet!" he said, with blasphemous audacity.

Wallace was helpless in the face of such reckless thought, and so sat looking at the handsome young fellow as he walked about.

"Well, now, Stacey, I guess you'll need to move. I had another session with the old man, but he won't give in, so I'm off for Chicago. Mother's brother, George Chapman, who lives about as near the school-house on the other side, will take you in. I guess we'd better go right down now and see about it. I've said good-by to the old man—for good this time; we didn't shake hands either," he said, as they walked down the road together. He was very stern and hard. Something of the father was hidden under his laughing exterior.

Stacey regretted deeply the necessity which drove him out of Allen's house. Mrs. Allen and Mattie had appealed to him very strongly. For years he had lived far from young women, and there was a magical power in the intimate home actions of this young girl. Her bare head, with simple arrangement of hair, somehow seemed the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

He thought of her as he sat at the table with George and his aged mother. They lived alone, and their lives were curiously silent. Once in a while a low-voiced question, and that was all.

George read the *Popular Science*, *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, and the *Open Court*, and brooded over them with slow intellectual movement. It was wonderful the amount of information he secreted from these periodicals. He was better informed than many college graduates.

He had little curiosity about the young

stranger. He understood he was to teach the school, and he did not go further in inquiry.

He tried Wallace once or twice on the latest discoveries of John Fiske and Edison, and then gave him up and retired to his seat beside the sitting-room stove.

On the following Monday morning school began, and as he took his way down the lane the wrecked church came again to his eyes. He walked past it with slow feet. His was a deeply religious nature, one that sorrowed easily over sin. Suffering of the poor did not trouble him; hunger seemed a little thing beside losing one's everlasting soul. Therefore to come from his studies upon such a monument of human depravity as this church was to receive a shock and to hear a call to action.

Approaching the school-house, his thought took a turn toward his scholars and toward Mattie. He had forgotten to ask her if she intended to be one of his pupils.

There were several children gathered at the school-house door as he came up. It was all very American—the boxlike house of white, the slender teacher approaching, the roughly clad urchins waiting.

He said, "Good-morning, scholars."

They chorussed a queer croak in reply—hesitating, inarticulate, shy. He unlocked the door and entered the cold bare room—familiar, unlovely, with a certain primitive power of associations. In such a room he had studied his primer and his Ray's Arithmetic. In such a room he had made gradual recession from the smallest front seat to the back wall seat; and from one side of such a room to the other he had furtively worshipped a graceful girlish head.

He allowed himself but a moment of such dreaming, and then he assumed command, and with his ready helpers a fire was soon started. Other children came in, timorous as rabbits, slipping by with an eye fixed on him like scared chickens. They pre-empted their seats by putting down books and slates, and there arose sly wars for possession, which he felt in curious amusement—it was so like his own life at that age.

He assumed command as nearly in the manner of the old-time teachers as he could recall, and the work of his teaching was begun. The day passed quickly,

and as he walked homeward again there stood that rotting church, and in his mind there rose a surging emotion larger than he could himself comprehend—a desire to rebuild it by uniting the warring factions, of whose lack of Christianity it was fatal witness.

IV.

Now this mystical thing happened. As this son of a line of preachers brooded on this unlovely strife among men, he lost the equipoise of the scholar and student of modern history. He grew narrower and more intense. The burden of his responsibility as a preacher of Christ grew daily more insupportable.

Toward the end of the week he announced preaching in the school-house on Sunday afternoon, and at the hour set he found the room crowded with people of all ages and sorts.

His heart grew heavy as he looked out over the room on women nursing querulous children, on the grizzled faces of grim-looking men, who eyed him with keen, unsympathetic eyes. He had hard, unfriendly material to work with. There were but few of the opposite camp there, while the Baptist leaders were all there, with more curiosity than sympathy in their faces.

They exulted to think the next preacher to come among them as an evangelist should be a Baptist.

After the singing, which would have dribbled away into failure but for Mattie, Wallace rose, looking very white and weak, and began his prayer. Some of the boys laughed when his voice stuck in his throat, but he went on to the end of an earnest supplication, feeling he had not touched them at all.

While they sang again, he sat looking down at them with dry throat and staring eyes. They seemed so hard, so unchristianlike. What could he say to them? He saw Mattie looking at him, and on the front seat sat three beautiful little girls huddled together with hands clasped; they were inexpressibly dainty by contrast. As he looked at them the thought came to him, what is the goodness of a girl—of a child? It is not partisan—it is not of creeds, of articles—it is goodness of thought, of deeds. His face lighted up with the inward feeling of this idea, and he rose resolutely.

"Friends, with the help of Christ I am

come among you to do you good. I shall hold meetings each night here in the school-house until we can unite and rebuild the church again. Let me say now, friends, that I was educated a Baptist. My father was a faithful worker in the Baptist Church, and so was his father before him. I was educated in a Baptist college, and I came here hoping to build up a Baptist Church." He paused.

"But I see my mistake. I am here to build up a Church of Christ, of good deeds and charity and peace, and so I here say I am no longer a Baptist or Methodist. I am only a preacher, and I will not rest until I rebuild the church which stands rotting away there." His voice rang with intellectual determination as he uttered those words.

The people listened. There was no movement now. Even the babies seemed to feel the need of being silent. When he began again it was to describe that hideous wreck.

Much more he said, carried out of himself by his passion. It was as if the repentant spirit of his denominational fathers were speaking through him; and yet he was not so impassioned that he did not see, or at least feel, the eyes of the strong young girl fixed upon him; his resolution he spoke looking at her, and a swift response seemed to leap from her eyes.

When it was over, some of the Methodists and one of the Baptists came up to shake hands with him, awkwardly wordless, and the pressure of their hands helped him. Many of the Baptist brethren slipped outside to discuss the matter. Some were indignant, others much more moved.

Allen went by him with an audible grunt of derision, and there was a dark scowl on his face, but Mattie smiled at him, with tears still in her eyes. She had been touched by his vibrant voice; she had no sins to repent of.

The sceptics of the neighborhood were quite generally sympathetic. "You've struck the right trail now, parson," said Chapman, as they walked homeward together. "The days of the old-time denominationalism are about played out."

But the young preacher was not so sure of it—now that his inspiration was gone. He remembered his debt to his college, to his father, to the denomination, and it was not easy to set aside the grip of such memories.

He sat late revolving the whole situation in his mind. When he went to bed it was still with him, and involved itself with his dreams; but always the young girl smiled upon him with sympathetic eyes and told him to go on—or so it seemed to him.

He was silent at breakfast. He went to school with a feeling that a return to teaching powerless heads to count and spell was now impossible. He sat in his scarred and dingy desk while they took their places, and his eyes had a passionate intensity of prayer in them which awed the pupils. He had assumed new grandeur and terror in their eyes. When they were seated he bowed his head and uttered a short plea for grace, and then he looked at them again.

On the low front seat, with dangling legs and red round faces, sat the little ones. Someway he could not call them to his knees and teach them to spell; he felt as if he ought to call them to him, as Christ did, to teach them love and reverence. It was impossible that they should not be touched by this neighborhood of hate and strife.

Behind them sat the older children, some of them with rough, hard, sly faces. Some grinned rudely and nudged each other. The older girls sat with bated breath; they felt something strange in the air. Most of them had heard his sermon the night before.

At last he broke silence. "Children, there is something I must say to you this morning. I'm going to have meeting here to-night, and it may be I shall not be your teacher any more—I mean in school. I wish you'd go home to-day and tell your people to come to church here to-night. I wish you'd all come yourselves. I want you to be good. I want you to love God and be good. I want you to go home and tell your people the teacher can't teach you here till he has taught the older people to be kind and generous. You may put your books away, and school will be dismissed."

The wondering children obeyed—some with glad promptness, others with sadness, for they had already come to like their teacher very much.

As he sat by the door and watched them file out, it was as if he were a king abdicating a throne. It was the most momentous hour of his life. He had set his face toward dark waters.

Mrs. Allen came over with Mattie to see him that day. She was a good woman, gentle and prayerful, and she said, with much emotion:

"Oh, Mr. Stacey, I hope you can patch things up here. If you could only touch his heart! He don't mean to do wrong, but he's so set in his ways—if he says a thing he sticks to it."

Stacey looked to Mattie for a word of encouragement, but she only looked away. It was impossible for her to put into words her feeling in the matter, which was more of admiration for his courage than for any part of his religious zeal. He was so different from other men. He had a touch of divinity in him now.

It did him good to have them come, and he repeated his vow:

"By the grace of our Lord, I am going to rebuild the Cyene Church," and his face paled and his eyes grew luminous.

The girl shivered with a sort of awe. He seemed to recede from her as he spoke, and to grow larger, too. Such nobility of purpose was new and splendid to her.

The revival was wondrously dramatic. The little school-house was crowded to the doors night by night. The reek of stable-stained coats and boots, the smell of strong tobacco, the effluvia of many breaths, the heat, the closeness, were forgotten in the fervor of the young evangel's utterances. His voice took on wild emotional cadences without his conscious effort, and these cadences sounded deep places in the heart. To these people, long unused to religious oratory, it was like John and Isaiah. It was poetry and the drama, and processions and apocalyptic visions. He had the histrionic spell, too, and his slender body lifted and dilated, and his head took on majesty and power, and the fling of his white hand was a challenge and an appeal.

A series of dramatic events took place on the third night.

On Wednesday Jacob Turner rose and asked the prayers of his neighbors, and was followed by two Baptist spearmen of the front rank. On Thursday the women all were weeping on each other's bosoms; only one or two of the men held out—old Deacon Allen and his antagonist, Stewart Marsden. Grim-visaged old figures they were, placed among repentant men and weeping women. They sat like

rocks in the rush of the two factions moving toward each other for peaceful union. Granitic, narrow, keen of thrust, they seemed unmoved, while all around them one by one sceptics acknowledged the pathos and dignity of the preacher, vicar of life and death.

Meanwhile the young evangel lived at high-pressure. He grew thinner and whiter each night. He toiled in the daytime to formulate his thoughts for the evening. He could not sleep till far into the night. The food he ate did him little good, while his heart went out constantly to his people in strenuous supplication. It was testimony of his human quality that he never for one moment lost that shining girl face out of his thought. He looked for it there night after night. It was his inspiration in speaking, as at the first.

On the nights when Mattie was not there his speech was labored (as the elders noticed), but on the blessed nights when she came and sang, her voice, amid all the rest, came to him, and uttered poetry and peace like a rill of cool sweet water. And afterward, when he walked home under the stars, his mind went with her, she was so strong and lithe and good to see. He did not realize the worshipping attitude the girl took before divine duties.

At last the great day came—the great night. In some way, perhaps by the growing mass of rushing emotion set in action by some deep-going phrase, or perhaps by some interior slow weakening of stubborn will, Deacon Allen gave way; and when the preacher called for penitents, the old man struggled to his feet, his seamed, weather-beaten face full of grotesque movement. He broke out:

"Brethren, pray for me; I'm a miserable sinner. I want to confess my sins—here—before ye all." He broke into sobbing terrible to hear. "My heart is made—flesh again—by the blessed power of Christ...."

He struggled to get his voice. One or two cried, "Praise God!" but most of them sat silent, awed into immobility.

The old man walked up the aisle. "I've been rebellious—and now I want to shake hands with you all—and I ask your prayers." He bent down and thrust his hand to Marsden, his enemy, while the tears streamed down his face.

Marsden turned white with a sort of

fear, but he rose awkwardly and grasped the outstretched hand, and then every soul rose as if by electric shock. "Amen!" burst forth. The preacher began a fervent prayer, and came down toward the grizzled, weeping old men, and they all embraced, while some old lady with sweet quavering voice raised a hymn, in which all joined, and found grateful relief from their emotional tension.

Allen turned to Mattie and his wife. "My boy—send for him—Herman."

It seemed as if the people could not go away. The dingy little school-house was like unto the shining temple of grace, and the regenerated seemed to fear that to go home might become a return to hate and strife. So they clung around the young preacher and would not let him go.

At last he came out with Allen holding to his arm. "You must come home with us to-night," he pleaded, and the young minister with glad heart consented, for he hoped he might walk beside Mattie; but this was not possible. There were several others in the group, and they moved off two and two up the deep hollows which formed the road in the snow.

The young minister walked with head uplifted to the stars, hearing nothing of the low murmur of talk, conscious only of his great plans, his happy heart, and the strong young girl who walked before him.

In the warm kitchen into which they came he lost something of his spiritual tension, and became more humanly aware of the significance of sitting again with these people. He gave the girl his coat and hat, and then watched her slip off her knitted hood and her cloak. Her eyes shone with returning laughter, and her cheeks were flushed with blood.

Looking upon her, the young evangel lost his look of exaltation, his eyes grew soft, and his limbs relaxed. His silence was no longer rapt—it was the silence of delicious, drowsy reverie.

V.

The next day Wallace did not rise at all. The collapse had come. The bad air, the nervous strain, the lack of sleep, had worn down his slender store of strength, and when the great victory came he fell like a tree whose trunk has been slowly gnawed across by teeth of silent saw. His drowse deepened into torpor.

In the bright winter morning, seated in a gay cutter behind a bay colt strung with clashing bells, Mattie drove to Ke-sota for the doctor. She felt the discord between the joyous jangle of the bells, the stream of sunlight, and the sparkle of snow crystals, but it only added to the poignancy of her anxiety.

She had not yet reached self-consciousness in her regard for the young preacher—she thought of him as a noble human being liable to death, and she chirped again and again to the flying colt, whose broad hoofs flung the snow in stinging shower against her face.

A call at the doctor's house sent him jogging out along the lanes, while she sent a telegram to Herman. As she whirled bay Tom into the road to go home, her heart rose in relief that was almost exaltation. She loved horses. She always sang under her breath, chiming to the beat of their bells, when alone, and now she loosened the rein and hummed an old love-song, while the powerful young horse squared away in a trot which was twelve miles an hour—*click, click-click, click-clangle, lang-ling, ling*.

In such air, in such sun, who could die? Her good animal strength rose dominant over fear of death.

She came upon the doctor jogging along in his old blue cutter, dozing in country-doctor style, making up for lost sleep.

"Out o' the way, doctor!" she gleefully called.

The doctor roused up and looked around with a smile. He was not beyond admiring such a girl as that. He snapped his whip-lash lightly on old Sofia's back, who looked up surprised, and seeming to comprehend matters, began to reach out broad, flat, thin legs in a pace which the proud colt respected. She came of illustrious line, did Sofia, scant-haired and ungracious as she now was.

"Don't run over me," called the doctor, ironically, and with Sofia still leading they swung into the yard.

Mattie went in with the doctor, while Allen looked after both horses. They found Chapman attending Wallace—who lay in a dazed quiet—conscious, but not definitely aware of material things.

The doctor looked his patient over carefully. Then he asked, "Who is the young mon?"

"He's been teaching here, or rather preaching."

"When did this coom on?"

"Last night. Wound up a big revival last night, I believe. Kind o' caved in, I reckon."

"That's all. Needs rest. He'll be wearin' a wood jacket if he doosna leave off preachin'."

"Regular jamboree. I couldn't stop him. One of these periodical neighborhood 'awakenings,' they call it."

"They have need of it here, na doot."

"Well, they need something—love for God—or man."

"M—well! It's lettles I can do. The wumman can do more, if the mon 'll be eatin' what they cuke for 'im," said the candid old Scotchman. "Mak' 'im eat. Mak' 'im eat."

Once more Tom pounded along the shining road to Kesota to meet the six-o'clock train from Chicago.

Herman, magnificently clothed in fur-lined ulster and cap, alighted with unusually grave face and hurried toward Mattie.

"Well, what is it, sis? Mother sick?"

"No; it's the teacher. He is unconscious. I've been for the doctor. Oh, we were scared!"

He looked relieved, but a little chagrined. "Oh, well, I don't see why I should be yanked out of my boots by a telegram because the teacher is sick! He isn't kin—yet."

For the first time a feeling of shame and confusion swept over Mattie, and her face flushed.

Herman's keen eyes half closed as he looked into her face.

"Mat—what—what! Now look here—how's this? Where's Ben Holly's claim?"

"He never had any." She shifted ground quickly. "Oh, Herman, we had a wonderful time last night! Father and Uncle Marsden shook hands—"

"What?" shouted Herman, as he fell in a limp mass against the cutter. "Bring a physician—I'm stricken."

"Don't act so! Everybody's looking."

"They'd better look. I'm drowning while they wait."

She untied the horse and came back.

"Climb in there and stop your fooling, and I'll tell you all about it."

He crawled in with tearing groans of mock agony, and then leaned his head against her shoulder. "Well, go on, sis; I can bear it now."

She nudged him to make him sit up.

"Well, you know we've had a revival."

"So you wrote. Must have been a screamer to fetch dad and old Marsden. A regular Pentecost of Shinar."

"It was—I mean it was beautiful. I saw father was getting stirred up. He prayed almost all day yesterday and at night. Well, I can't tell you, but Wallace talked, oh, so beautiful and tender!"

"She calls him Wallace?" mused Herman, like a comedian.

"Hush! And then came the hand-shaking, and then the minister came home with us, because father asked him to."

"Well, well! I supposed *you* must have asked him."

The girl was hurt, and she showed it. "If you make fun, I won't tell you another word," she said.

"Away Chicago! enter Cyene! Well, come, I won't fool any more."

"Then after Wallace—I mean—"

"Let it stand. Come to the murder."

"Then father came and asked me to send for you, and mother cried, and so did he. And, oh, Hermie, he's so sweet and kind! Don't make fun of him, will you? It's splendid to have him give in, and everybody feels glad that the district will be all friendly again."

Herman did not gibe again. His voice was gentle. The pathos in the scene appealed to him. "So the old man sent for me himself, did he?"

"Yes; he could hardly wait till morning. But this morning, when we came to call the teacher he didn't answer, and father went in and found him unconscious. Then I went for the doctor."

Bay Tom whirled along in the splendid dusk, his breath flaring like ghostly banners on the cold crisp air. The stars overhead were points of green and blue and crimson light, low-hung, changing each moment.

Their influence entered the soul of the mocking young fellow. He felt very solemn, almost melancholy, for a moment.

"Well, sis, I've got something to tell you all. I'm going to tell it to you by degrees. I'm going to be married."

"Oh!" she gasped, with quick, indrawn breath. "Who?"

"Don't be ungrammatical, whatever you do. She's a cashier in a restaurant, and she's a fine girl," he added, steadily,

as if combating a prejudice. He forgot for the moment that such prejudices did not exist in Cyene.

Sis was instantly tender, and very, very serious.

"Of course she is, or you wouldn't care for her. Oh, I'd like to see her!"

"I'll take you up some day and show her to you."

"Oh, will you? Oh, when can I go?" She was smit into gravity again. "Not till the teacher is well."

Herman pretended to be angry. "Dog take the teacher, the old spindle-legs! If I'd known he was going to raise such a ruction in our quiet and peaceable neighborhood, I never would have brought him here."

Mattie did not laugh; she pondered. She never quite understood her brother when he went off on those queer tirades, which might be a joke or an insult. He had grown away from her in his city life.

They rode on in silence the rest of the way, except now and then an additional question from Mattie concerning his sweet-heart.

As they neared the farm-house she lost interest in all else but the condition of the young minister. They could see the light burning dimly in his room, and in the parlor and kitchen as well, and this unusual lighting stirred the careless young man deeply. It was associated in his mind with death and birth, and also with great joy.

The house was lighted so the night his elder brother died, and it looked so to him when he whirled into the yard with the doctor when Mattie was born.

"Oh, I hope he isn't worse!" said the girl, with deep feeling.

Herman put his arm about her, and she knew he knew.

"So do I, sis."

Allen came to the door as they drove in, and the careless boy realized suddenly the emotional tension his father was in. As the old man came to the sleigh-side he could not speak. His fingers trembled as he took the outstretched hand of his boy.

Herman's voice shook a little:

"Well, dad, Mattie says the war is over."

The old man tried to speak, but only coughed, and then he blew his nose. At last he said, brokenly,

"Go right in; your mother's waitin'."

It was singularly dramatic to the youth. To come from the careless, superficial life of his city companions into contact with such primeval passions as these made him feel like a spectator at some new and powerful and tragic play.

His mother fell upon his neck and cried, while Mattie stood by pale and anxious. Inside the parlor could be heard the mumble of men's voices.

In such wise do death and the fear of death fall upon country homes. All day the house had swarmed with people. All day this mother had looked forward to the reconciliation of her husband with her son. All day had the pale and silent minister of God kept his corpselike calm, while all about the white snow gleamed, and radiant shadows filled every hollow, and the cattle bawled and frisked in the barn-yard, and the fowls cackled joyously, while the mild soft wind breathed warmly over the land.

Mattie cried out to her mother in quick, low voice, "Oh, mother, how is he?"

"He ain't no worse. The doctor says there ain't no immediate danger."

The girl brought her hands together girlishly, and said: "Oh, I'm so glad. Is he awake?"

"No; he's asleep."

"Is the doctor still here?"

"Yes."

"I guess I'll step in," said Herman.

The doctor and George Chapman sat beside the hard-coal heater, talking in low voices. The old doctor was permitting himself the luxury of a story of pioneer life. He rose with automatic courtesy, and shook hands with Herman.

"How's the sick man getting on?"

"Vera well—vera well—consederin' the mon is a complete worn-out—that's all—naething more. Thes floom-a-didale bezniss of rantin' away on the fear o' the Laird for sax weeks wull have worn out the frame of a bool-dawg."

Herman and Chapman smiled. "I hope you'll tell her that."

"Na fear, yong mon," said the grim old Scotchman. "Weel, now ai'll juist go tak' anither look at him."

Herman went in with the doctor, and stood looking on while the old man peered and felt about. He came out soon, and leaving a few directions with Herman and Chapman, took his departure. Everything seemed favorable, he said.

There was no longer poignancy of anxiety in Mattie's mind. She was too much of a child to imagine the horror of loss. She was grave and gay by turns. Her healthy and wholesome nature continually reasserted itself over the power of her newly attained woman's interest in the young preacher. She went to bed and slept dreamlessly, while Herman yawned and inwardly raged at the fix in which circumstances had placed him.

Like many another lover, days away from his sweetheart were lost days. He wondered how she would take all the life down here. It would be good fun to bring her down, anyway, and hear her talk. He planned such a trip, and grew so interested in the thought he forgot his patient.

In the early dawn Wallace rallied and woke. Herman heard the rustle of the pillow, and turned to find the sick man's eyes looking at him fixedly, calm but puzzled. Herman's lips slowly changed into a beautiful boyish smile, and Wallace replied by a faint parting of the lips, when Herman said:

"Hello, old man! How do you find yourself?" His hearty humorous greeting seemed to do the sick man good. Herman approached the bed. "Know where you are?" Wallace slowly put out a hand, and Herman took it. "You're coming on all right. Want some breakfast? Make it bucks?" he said, in Chicago restaurant slang. "White wings—sunny—one up coff."

All this was good tonic for Wallace, and an hour later he sipped broth, while Mrs. Allen and the Deacon and Herman stood watching the process with apparently consuming interest. Mattie was still soundly sleeping.

There began delicious days of convalescence, during which he looked peacefully out at the coming and going of the two women, each possessing powerful appeal to him—one the motherly presence which had been denied him for many years, the other something he had never permitted himself—a sweetheart's daily companionship.

He lay there planning his church, and also his home. Into the thought of a new church came shyly but persistently the thought of a fireside of his own, with this young girl sitting in the glow of it waiting for him. His life had held little

romance in its whole length. He had earned his own way through school and to college. His slender physical energies had been taxed to their utmost at every stage of his climb, but now it seemed as though some blessed rest and peace were at hand.

Meanwhile, the bitter partisans met each other coming and going out of the gate of the Allen estate, and the goodness of God shone in their softened faces. Herman was sceptical of its lasting quality, but was forced to acknowledge that it was a lovely gift. He it was who made the electrical suggestion to rebuild the church as an evidence of good faith.

The enthusiasm of the neighborhood took flame. It should be done. A meeting was called. Everybody subscribed money or work. It was a generous outpouring of love and faith.

It was Herman also who counselled secrecy. "It would be a nice thing to surprise him," he said. "We'll agree to keep the scheme from him at home, if you don't give it away."

They set to work like bees. The women came down one day and took possession with brooms and mops and soap, and while the carpenters repaired the windows they fell savagely upon the grime of the seats and floors. The walls of the church echoed with girlish laughter. Everything was scoured, from the door-hinges to the altar rails. New doors were hung and a new stove secured, and then came the painters to put a new coat of paint on the inside. The cold weather forbade repainting the outside.

The sheds were rebuilt by men whose hearts glowed with old-time fire. It was like pioneer times, when "barn-raising" and "bees" made life worth while in a wild stern land. It was a beautiful time. The old men were moved to tears, and the younger rough men shouted cheery cries to hide their own deep emotion. Hand met hand in heartiness never shown before. Neighbors frequented each other's homes, and the old times of visiting and brotherly love came back upon them. Nothing marred the perfect beauty of their revival—save the fear of its evanescence. It seemed too good to last.

Meanwhile love of another and merrier sort went on. The young men and maidens turned prayer-meeting into trysts, and scrubbing-bees into festivals. They rode from house to house under

glittering stars, over sparkling snows, singing:

"Hallelujah! 'tis done:
I believe on the Son;
I am saved by the blood
Of the Crucified One."

And their rejoicing chorus was timed to the clash of bells on swift young horses. Who shall say they did not right? Did the Galilean forbid love and joy?

No matter. God's stars, the mysterious night, the bells, the watchful bay of dogs, the sting of snow, the croon of loving voices, the clasp of tender arms, the touch of parting lips—these things, these things outweigh death and hell, and all that makes the criminal tremble. Being saved, they must of surety rejoice.

And through it all Wallace crawled slowly back to life and strength. He ate of Mother Allen's chicken broth and of toast of Mattie's care-taking hand, and gradually assumed color and heart. His solemn eyes looked at the powerful young girl with an intensity which seemed to take her strength from her. She would gladly have given her blood for him, if it had occurred to her, or if it had been suggested as a good thing; instead she gave him potatoes baked to a nicety, and buttered toast that would melt on the tongue, and, on the whole, they served the purpose better.

One day a smartly dressed man called to see Wallace. Mattie recognized him as the Baptist clergyman from Kesota. He came in, and introducing himself, said he had heard of the excellent work of Mr. Stacey, and that he would like to speak with him.

Wallace was sitting in his chair in the parlor. Herman was in Chicago, and there was no one but Mrs. Allen and Mattie in the house.

The Kesota minister introduced himself to Wallace, and then entered upon a long eulogium upon his work in Cyene. He asked after his credentials, his plans, his connections, and then he said:

"You've done a *fine* work in softening the hearts of these people. We had almost *despaired* of doing anything with them. Yes, you have done a *won-der-ful* work, and now we must reorganize a regular society here. I will be out again when you get stronger, and we'll see about it."

Wallace was too weak to take any stand in the talk, and so allowed him to get up

and go away without protest or explanation of his own plans.

When Herman came down on Saturday, he told him of the Baptist minister's visit and the proposition. Herman stretched his legs out toward the fire and put his hands in his pockets. Then he rose and took a strange attitude, such as Wallace had seen in comic pictures—it was, in fact, the attitude of a Bowery boy.

"Say—look here! If you want 'o set dis community by de ears agin, you do dat ting—see? You play dat confidence game and dey'll rat ye—see? You invite us to come into a non-partisan deal—see?—and den you springs your own platform on us in de joint caucus—and we won't stand it! Dis goes troo de way it began, or we don't play—see?"

Out of all this Wallace deduced his own feeling—that continued peace and good-will lay in keeping clear of all doctrinal debates and disputes—the love of Christ, the desire to do good and to be clean. These emotions had been roused far more deeply than he realized, and he lifted his face to God in the hope that no lesser thing should come in to mar the beauty of his Church.

There came a day when he walked out in the sunshine, and heard the hens caw-cawing about the yard, and saw the young colts playing about the barn. And the splendor of the winter day dazzled him as if he were looking upon the broad-flung robe of the Most High. Everywhere the snow lay ridged with purple and brown hedges. Smoke rose peacefully from chimneys, and the sound of boys skating on a near-by pond added the human element.

The trouble of concealing the work of the community upon the church increased daily, and Mattie feared that some hint of it had come to him. She had her plan. She wanted to drive him down herself, and let him see the reburnished temple alone. But this was impossible. On the day when he seemed able to go, her father drove them all down. Marsden was there also, and several of his women-folks, putting down a new carpet on the platform. As they drew near the church, Wallace said,

"Why, they've fixed up the sheds!"

Mattie nodded. She was trembling with the delicious excitement of it—she wanted him hurried into the church at

once. He had hardly time to think before he was whirled up to the new porch, and Marsden came out, followed by several women. He was bewildered by it all. Marsden helped him out, with hearty voice sounding:

"Careful now. Don't hurry!"

Mattie took one arm, and so he entered the church. Everything repainted. Everything warm and bright and cozy.

The significance of it came to him like a wave of light, and he took his seat in the pulpit-chair and stared at them all with a look on his pale face which moved them more than words. He was like a man transfigured by an inward light. His eyes for an instant glowed with this marvellous fire, then moistened with tears, and his voice came in a sob of joy, and he could only say,

"Friends—brethren."

Marsden, after much coughing, said:

"We all united on this. We wanted to have you come to the church then. Well, we couldn't bear to have you see it again the way it was."

He understood it now. It was the sign of a united community. It set the seal of Christ's victory over evil passions, and the young preacher's head bowed in prayer, and they all knelt, while his weak voice returned thanks to the Lord for his gifts.

Then they all rose and shook off the oppressive solemnity, and he had time to look around at all the changes. At last he turned to Mattie and reached out his hand—he had the boldness of a man in the shadow of some mighty event which makes false modesty and conventions shadowy things of little importance. His sharpened interior sense read her clear soul, and he knew she was his, therefore he reached her his hand, and she came to him with a flush on her face, which died out as she stood proudly by his side, while he said,

"And Martha shall help me."

Therefore this good thing happened—that in the midst of his fervor and his consecration to God's work, the love of woman found a place.